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BIRDS THAT WAR ON RODENT PESTS.

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Hawks and Owls Found to Do More Good Than Harm to
the Texas Farmer - Poison Baits for Rats, Gophers, and Rabbits.

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Washington, D.C.

Many hawks and owls,

which anyone is now at liberty to shoot, should be strictly protected because of their usefulness in preying on mice, ground squirrels and pocket gophers, say specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture who have studied the problem of ridding Texas of these pests. By destroying harmful rodents, it is said, hawks do the farmer more than enough good to offset the loss in poultry caused by a few individual birds.

At the present time several species of ground squirrels are doing considerable damage in Texas. Nearly all the larger hawks, known collectively as chicken hawks, feed upon these rodents, killing them in large numbers. In this work Swainson's hawk, a large, sluggish, slow-flying species, and the long-tailed, white-rumped marsh hawk are most efficient, but many ground squirrels are eaten also by the ferruginous rough-leg, the red-tailed and Harris' hawk. Even the little sparrow hawk attacks the 13-stripe ground squirrel, and the rough-legged hawk is sometimes known as the squirrel hawk because of the numbers of this pest which it destroys.

Prairie dogs are quicker in escaping from hawks than the ground squirrels. The ferruginous rough-leg, however, secures considerable numbers.

The barn owl and the great horned owl find many victims among pocket gophers and these animals are often captured in daylight by

birds and the cotton rat is the prey of the short-eared owl and red-tailed hawk.

In addition to the birds that prey upon the pests mentioned, there are many species which are beneficial in other ways. Thus, all of the 60 varieties known at present to feed upon the cotton boll weevil are found at some season in the State. Among these may be mentioned the painted bunting, the barn and cliff swallows, the orchard and Bullock's orioles, and the meadowlarks. A host of other birds do good in other ways and, with few exceptions, should be encouraged to make their homes on range and ranch lands.

To assist in the destruction of such noxious rodents as mice, ground squirrels and pocket gophers, the Government specialists recommend a number of poisons. Some of these are as follows. In their use, however, it is pointed out every precaution must be taken to keep the poison out of the reach of children and domestic animals:

PRAIRIE-DOG POISON.

Dissolve 1 ounce of strychnine sulphate in $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints of boiling water. Add 1 heaping tablespoonful of gloss starch, previously mixed with a little cold water, and boil until a clear paste is formed. Add 1 ounce of baking soda and stir to a creamy mass. Add one-twelfth ounce of saccharine and one-fourth pint of molasses and stir thoroughly. Pour over 13 quarts of milo maize or ferterita and mix well until grain is evenly coated. Allow to dry before using. If hard water is used, add one-fourth pint of vinegar for each ounce of strychnine.

In bushel quantities use, as above directed, $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces strychnine sulphate, one-fifth ounce saccharine, $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces soda, $1\frac{1}{4}$ ounces of starch, $1\frac{1}{2}$ quarts boiling water, and five-eighths pint molasses.

Scatter poison when the natural food of the prairie-dog is scarce on a clean hard place near the hole, one quart to 40 holes.

JACK RABBIT POISON.

Alfalfa poison: Dissolve 1 ounce of strychnine sulphate in 2 gallons of boiling water and sprinkle over 16 pounds of leafy alfalfa hay, chopped in 2-inch lengths. The poisoned hay may be scattered in small heaps along rabbit trails in enclosures from which stock is excluded.

Grain poison: Mix together 1 ounce of powdered strychnine

quarts of dampened baits made by cutting sweet potatoes or carrots into one-half to three-fourths inch cubes. To insure even distribution of the poison stir baits while applying the powder.

The gopher's runway may be located several inches below the surface by probing with a bluntly pointed stick. An opening should be made to admit 2 of the baits and then closed.

RAT POISON.

To 1 part of barium carbonate and 4 parts of flour or meal, or 1 part of barium carbonate and 8 parts of oatmeal, add a little cold water and mix thoroughly into a stiff dough. The barium carbonate may also be sprinkled on fish, toasted bread, or moistened bread and butter.

Arsenic may be used in place of the barium carbonate as above described, but it is unreliable in its effect.

Grain poisoned with strychnine, prepared as above recommended for prairie-dogs, is very effective if all other foods are carefully covered. Baits should be placed in rat runs or holes.

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